

The Commoner.

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Beginning to Think.

I recently had an interesting conversation with a well-to-do republican and the substance of it is reproduced because it illustrates what is going on in the minds of many who have been so busily engaged in business that they have neglected their civic duties. The republican referred to introduced himself on a railroad train and asked if he might submit a question. Of course he was invited to ask as many questions as he liked. He began by explaining that he had grown up in a republican family and had voted the republican ticket regularly down to and including 1900, but he said that since that time he had been thinking and that he had come to the conclusion that some men were accumulating such large fortunes that they were acquiring a dangerous influence over the country—among such he mentioned Morgan and Rockefeller. To assure me that he was himself in no danger of want he remarked that for a number of years his income had ranged from ten to thirty thousand dollars per year. After enumerating the evils of concentrated wealth he stated his conclusion, namely, that he could see but three possible remedies; first, the reform of monopolists so that they would cease to tyrannize over their fellows; second, restraining legislation, and, third, revolution. He did not have much faith in the reformation of the monopolists and did not like to think of the possibility of revolution, and he was almost convinced that the republican party would not enact effective restraining legislation. He asked me if I could think of any other remedies and I told him that he had covered the ground. I agreed with him that while an appeal to the conscience of the monopolist is proper and desirable it would not be fair to make the people rely for their safety upon the success of such an appeal. I assured him that revolution was not to be thought of; that those who would not protect their rights by the ballot need never expect to have them protected by force, and I had no difficulty in agreeing with him that the republican party is impotent to supply a remedy. The republican party lost some of its best men in 1872—men who had joined the party from high motives and would not stay with it when it became corrupted by power. Then the green-back and populist parties drew away a large number of republicans who were not willing to have the country run by a few financiers in their own interests. In 1896 and in 1900 the republican party again suffered from the desertion of many of its most intelligent and patriotic members—some estranged by the gold standard and others by the policy of imperialism. The party thus weakened by constant erosion was further injured by the accession of a considerable number of gold, corporation and monopoly democrats. Besides having exchanged its reformers for the money-loving and money-serving element in other parties it has been mortgaged by its leaders to the banks, the syndicates and the combines. It is powerless to respond to the wishes of the people and must in the end disappoint those of its members who still entertain a lingering hope of its regeneration.

Not only does the republican party refuse to yield to the reasonable demands of its better members, but it goes on building the dam higher and higher, unmindful of the fact that each new plank

increases the danger of a flood, for public opinion, now restrained, will some day sweep all obstacles away and mock the efforts of those who attempt to stop the progress of civilization and check the development of human liberty.

My caller informed me that he knew fifty republicans among his personal acquaintances who were thinking seriously on economic and political conditions and who were reaching the same conclusion that he had.

It was encouraging to learn of this promised reinforcement from the ranks of successful business men. We have already a powerful army of the middle classes—those who have brain and muscle, who are willing to work and only desire a fair share of the rewards of their toil—the common people who are both the wealth producers and warriors of the nation. We can never expect to secure the support of those who can be corrupted or coerced, for our party lacks the means either to buy or to compel votes, and let us hope that it will always lack the desire to do so. Our appeal must be to those who think and have the courage to act, and this appeal can be made to the rich as well as to the poor—to the rich that they may leave their children a good government, which is a more substantial inheritance than wealth; to the poor that they may guarantee to their children a fair chance in the race of life.

The democratic party is really the conservative party of the nation; it builds upon time-honored principles and opens its doors to those of every calling, profession and occupation, provided, they believe in equal rights to all and special privileges to none. It is gratifying to see that men of independent fortunes are awakening to the seriousness of the situation and beginning to search for a remedy for present ills.

Reform by Commission.

At the Oyster Bay conference it was decided that the president would not discuss tariff reform at this time, but Speaker Henderson's withdrawal forced the issue into the arena and at Cincinnati President Roosevelt admitted that it might become necessary to take the tariff off of some trust-made articles. By the time he reached Logansport, Ind., two days later, he was so impressed with the necessity of tariff reform that he suggested "a bipartisan commission to consider the entire subject and make a report to congress."

It looks very much as if the republican party would have to do something and it is not surprising that a commission is proposed.

Of course the high tariff advocates favor a commission, first, because it delays action—a commission must be selected with care and that takes time; then it must investigate thoroughly and that takes more time, and then it must prepare a report and that takes still more time. Second, the commission can be made up of men who do not want the tariff reduced and their investigations and reports can be made as favorable as possible to a high tariff; and, third, the manufacturers will have a chance to elect a friendly congress while the voters are feeling secure in the hope that the commission will attend to the matter. A commission is useless and only postpones the day of revision, if it does not prevent it altogether. Congress is the only body that can revise the tariff and the sooner it begins the better.

The mention of a commission shows how frightened the republican leaders are, but it will not deter the democrats from demanding that the revision be made by a body chosen by the people and representing them.

A Minister's Rebuke.

Rev. Henry Homer Washburn of Christ's Episcopal church, Oyster Bay, N. Y., delivered a memorial sermon, at President Roosevelt's request, on the anniversary of the assassination of President McKinley. After an enumeration of the many virtues of the deceased executive, he branched out into a discussion of the trust question and is reported as saying:

So busy have we been with the concerns of every day that few have realized that we are marching on toward another national event. How near or how remote it may be, or what shape it will assume, none may foresee. Mr. Lincoln and others warned the country against the danger of a rising money power. But capital was needed for the development of trade and natural resources and business has moved along such natural lines that little concern for the peace of the future has been felt.

The country has never been so prosperous as on the day when the report of a pistol startled the nation and numbered Mr. McKinley with our martyred presidents. Who can read history and believe that the course of events happened by chance? It was by no accident that Judas betrayed the great Nazarene to be crucified. But who can tell why Mr. McKinley was so suddenly taken from the earth in the hour apparently of his greatest usefulness.

Who could fill his place?

Fortunately a David was vice president.

How came he to be vice president?

Was it by accident?

How much planning and how many misadventures did it take to create that accident?

But he has studied trust methods and is convinced that the good of all demands that the trusts be brought under control of the national government. Is not this sound judgment? Is not this a conservative proposition? How can one have any knowledge of human nature and not see the possibility of danger, coming by and through the unguarded use of great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few? You hear of "good trusts" and "bad trusts." What does this mean, if not that unscrupulous men already at the head of certain trusts are planning methods to cheat, rob, and oppress? What course will the generality of business men pursue when they see wealth within reach of their grasp? To hold that no danger may come through great accumulations of wealth is to ignore the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

From Genesis to Revelations, the Bible is filled with precepts and warnings regarding the power and use of wealth. It declares that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and it utters a prophecy that all may read who will: "Howl, ye rich men, for the woes that are coming upon you." Evidently the president sees and is convinced of the possibility of danger.

There is certainly danger ahead. The first utterances of the president favoring governmental control have brought upon him caustic criticism. This shows the animus of the power he is seeking to control. Meanwhile slowly but surely we are marching toward a new national event. Civilization ever progresses, but great reformers have generally come through the perils of fire and sword.

If ever circumstances indicated that one was placed providentially in the executive chair of the nation, then the circumstances that attended the promotion of Mr. Roosevelt so indicated. If words mean anything his mo-